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## A harrowing 'Hecuba Again' in Rust Belt Books

By Colin Dabkowski

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"Hecuba Again," Frank Canino's adaptation of Euripedes' play, features an (almost) all-female cast.

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**T**he first event on my Infringement calendar was a staged reading of a new play, "Hecuba Again: Euripedes Deconstructed," an adaptation of Euripedes' famous tale of suffering and revenge in the wake of the Trojan War by local playwright **Frank Canino**.

What drew me was the head-spinning cast list, which features some of Buffalo's most talented female actors, among them **Kathleen Betsko Yale** in the title role along with **Darleen Pickering Hummert, Victoria Perez, Joy Scime, Virginia Brannon** and **Verneice Turner**.

And tonight's performance, the first of three, didn't disappoint.

Theatergoers have been lucky to see the mythic Trojan War from many angles this season, with fine productions of "**An Iliad**" at Road Less Traveled Productions and "**The Trojan Women**," another play by Euripedes about the war, in a Ujima Theatre/Buffalo Public Theatre Coproduction. So Canino's smart and muscular 70-minute adaptation comes at a time of uncommon familiarity with the large and potent body of drama dealing with Trojan War.

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It also comes at a time when the ravages of war, and the price it exacts from innocent civilians, is much on our minds. In Canino's hands, Euripedes words are turned into harsh, strongly worded and expletive-laden echoes, which emanate from the battered and beaten city of Troy across continents and centuries. Though there was no set during Thursday's performance, Canino made it clear that he means the action to take place not only in its original setting, but also in Ireland, Bosnia and Syria.

And though this was just a preliminary reading and Canino will no doubt iron out what few small kinks seem to exist in his script, he's achieved something extraordinarily potent here. His adaptation, as Canino explained after the show, comes on the heels of a spate of them, many from female playwrights. It's spare, funny in just the right spots and in just the right way, and manages to use the chorus in a way that doesn't remind you of a bad high school production of "Antigone."

Here's hoping Euripedes' words, via Canino's alternately casual and cutting language, wind up in a full production on a local stage. And if that production could star someone as gifted as Yale in the title role, then so much the better.